flickr.org

How To Write a 100-Year Plan

SESSION PLAN

Synopsis

The Flickr Foundation's mission is to keep Flickr's pictures visible for 100 years. That timescale implies something unusual: an organisation built to outlast its founders guided by a plan maintained and adapted by different generations in the same community over time. We called this a 100-year plan, and this workshop is about how to write one.

Enjoy!

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What you'll need

- Post-its and pens (one set per person)
- A sheet of blank paper per person
- Wall space for posting up the longevity post-its
- Phones (for the photo exercise only - we heartily encourage a no-screens rule otherwise)
- Someone dedicated to recording what happens

Workshop outline

We think 8–12 people and 2-2.5 hours is a good size and duration. We strongly recommend including some outside time: it's good for chewing on the ideas casually together.

1. Thinking about a century - 30 min
    a. Place
    b. Longevity
2. Draft & Discussion - 60 min
    a. Write a draft, share
    b. Discuss: Organisation and its people
    c. Discuss: Measuring and looking ahead
    d. Discuss: Barriers
3. Optional Fresh Air Moment - 30 min
4. Reflections - 30 min

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SECTION 1: THINKING ABOUT A CENTURY *30 min*

Part 1: Place

Ask participants to:
→ Think of a place they care about
→ Find a photograph of that place on their phone and share it with the group
→ During the session, try to find the oldest photograph of that place they can

Discussion question (ask aloud): How do these places make you feel?

Facilitator notes:

- Encourage specificity. Not city level. Go to a street or a building or view
- Ask people *how* they found their pictures, especially older ones
- Let this lead naturally into a conversation about how hard it is to retrieve old things

Part 2: Longevity

Ask participants to use post-its individually (one idea per post-it), then put them on the wall:
→ What's something in your life that's lasted 100 years?
→ What's something you want to last another 100 years?
→ What's something you *don't* want to last 100 years?

Discuss these as a group.

SECTION 2: DRAFT & DISCUSSION *60 min*

Part 1: OK, draft!

1. Give everyone a sheet of paper. Ask them to spend 10 minutes writing a 100-year plan.
2. Ask everyone to pass their plan to the person on their left to read.
3. Open up to group discussion.

Facilitator note: In our experience, conversation often takes off from here without prompting. The following prompts will help if it doesn't, or they can be worked through by the group depending on time.

Part 2: Org & people

1. Infrastructure & inheritance

    - How do we think about building something intended to outlast us, that won't benefit us personally?
    - How should infrastructure be conceived so it can be inherited by future generations?
2. The organisation's design
    - What do we think about governance and transitions?
    - What plasticity or rituals can we imagine?
3. Community of practice
    - What does continuity feel like?
    - How might communal culture need to shift over time?

Part 3: Measuring & looking ahead

1. Preparing for the future
    - What should we be forecasting?
    - What signals should we be listening for?
2. Positive effects
    - What do we want to encourage?
    - What could we measure, and how?
    - What are the key dynamics to observe?
3. Barriers
    - What's the hardest part of 100-year thinking?
    - What conditions make a 100-year plan easier to create and maintain?

SECTION 3: OPTIONAL FRESH AIR MOMENT *30 min*

Good for informal conversation. Not essential, but recommended. Talk a walk or spend time in a green space nearby. Make sure you can accommodate any accessibility needs for your participants ahead of time.

SECTION 4: REFLECTIONS *30 min*

- Introductions and work histories — we deliberately save these until now. People speak more freely before they've established their credentials with each other.
- Debrief: what came up in the discussion?
- Look together for themes and structures
- Next steps and sharing contact info

Extra facilitator questions

In case the conversation stalls…

- What notes to the future could we write?
- How do we develop practices for colleagues who haven't been born yet?
- How should we think about visual legacy beyond our lifetime?
- What is good reinvention?
- What positive impact do you want to have on the world?
- What does it mean to prioritise transparency over time?
- What does success look like after 10 years? At 100?
- How might the culture of this organisation need to change?

Signals to study over time

Over the next 10, 50, 100 years, which direction are we moving, and is that what we intended?

The measures ***we*** are interested in watching over time are listed below. They may or may not translate to your context. Feel free to create your own!

1. **More/less human?** How much of the organisation's work, voice, and decision-making involves real people versus automated or institutional processes? Is the human element growing or eroding?
2. **More/less transparent?** Can the people affected by this organisation see how it works, how decisions get made, and how resources are used? Is that visibility increasing or shrinking?
3. **More/less diverse voices?** Who is shaping the organisation's direction, and who isn't? Is the range of perspectives involved widening or narrowing over time?
4. **More/less diffuse?** Is the organisation's reach and influence spreading beyond its origin or consolidating?
5. **More/less accessible?** Can more or fewer people engage with what this organisation produces or protects? What are the technical, financial, linguistic, or geographic barriers? Are they growing or shrinking?

Good luck!

Please note:
This document has a KeepRight declaration attached, to give our instructions to any future stewards of it: https://keepright.info/declaration/_hel9FPQBIkhlJkl